



## **riffle beetle**

representative species

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Arthropoda
Class:	Insecta
Order:	Coleoptera
Family:	Elmidae

### **Features**

Riffle beetles undergo complete metamorphosis (egg, larva, pupa, adult). The larva is less than one-half inch long and resembles a small torpedo. It has rings around its body, is pointed at both ends, and usually is gray. It has three pairs of jointed legs, each with a single claw. A trapdoor-type structure can close over the anal gills. The adult is a tiny, oval to elongate, black or gray insect. It has long legs, each with two large claws. The front wings are hard and meet in a straight line down the middle of the back when not in flight. The hind wings are membranous (thin, pliable) and fold under the front wings when not in flight.

### **Natural History**

Riffle beetle larvae are aquatic and live in streams. Adults often are aquatic as well, although a few species are terrestrial. They eat diatoms and algae. Adults walk slowly under water, but must rise for oxygen. The female deposits eggs on plant materials in the water.

### **Habitats**

interior rivers and streams

### **Iowa Status**

common; native

### **Iowa Range**

statewide

### **Bibliography**

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.